

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GENEVA 04312 211643Z
ACTION OES-07

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INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 04312

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: WHO TBIO TPHY IN
SUBJECT: INDIAN BAN ON EXPORT OF PRIMATES

REF: A) NEW DELHI 3711, B) STATE 71016

1. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION IN REF B, MISSION TOOK UP THE MATTER WITH DR F.T. PERKINS, CHIEF, BIOLOGICS UNIT, W.H.O. DR PERKINS IS NOW MOST ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT. HE WAS FULLY INFORMED OF THE CHARACTER OF THE DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN DESAI AND MAHLER IN DELHI, WHICH HE AGREED PROVED TO BE A MOST UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT. HE REPORTED THAT PRASAD, SECRETARY OF HEALTH, WAS EQUALLY DISTURBED BY THE TURN OF EVENTS AT THIS MEETING.

2. NEVERTHELESS, W.H.O. IS ACTIVELY SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION TO THE DILEMMA. THEY ARE EXPLORING TWO POSSIBILITIES: 1) TO SEEK THE SUPPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH COMMUNITY IN INDIA FOR REDRESS OF THE SITUATION, REALIZING THAT THE DECISION OF THE PRIME MINISTER IS NOT EASILY CHALLENGED; 2) TO ATTEMPT TO FIND OTHER SOURCES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.

3. DR PERKINS RECALLED THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT GAVE RISE
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TO THE DECISION OF DESAI. ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION, THIS CAME ABOUT BECAUSE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN BROUGHT DIRECTLY TO THE ATTENTION OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT INFORMATION THAT RHESUS MONKEYS WERE BEING USED IN THE USA IN THE STUDY OF RADIATION EFFECTS. IT WAS THIS INFORMATION WHICH AROUSED THE PRIME MINISTER TO SUCH VIOLENT OPPOSITION AGAINST FURTHER EXPORT OF PRIMATES, AND ESPECIALLY

TO THE USA.

4. IN THE LIGHT OF THESE EVENTS, DR PERKINS BELIEVES THE MOST PRODUCTIVE APPROACH IS LIKELY TO BE ON A MULTILATERAL BASIS BY W.H.O. OBVIOUSLY THEY WILL NEED THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE US IN ANYTHING THEY ATTEMPT, BUT THEY FEEL THAT THEIR GOOD OFFICES MAY BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN BILATERAL EFFORTS BY THE US. IN PURSUIT OF THIS APPROACH, DR PERKINS INTENDS TO DEVOTE MOST OF HIS ATTENTION OVER THE NEXT WEEKS TO THE PROBLEM AND WILL RETURN TO INDIA IN APRIL FOR DISCUSSIONS THERE. VANDEN HEUVEL

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